

**SUPERIOR COURT OF
CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**

**SELF-HELP
LEGAL ACCESS CENTER**

*We are happy to be helping you
represent yourself in Court.*

Welcome to the SHLA Center.



SERVICE HOURS AND LOCATION

*Ukiah Superior Courthouse,
Room 304*

**Monday through Thursday
12 noon – 4 PM**

*Ft. Bragg Ten Mile Branch,
Law Library*

**The second Friday each month the Self-Help Legal Access (“SHLA”) Center will operate in Ft. Bragg
10 AM to 12 Noon and
1 PM to 3 PM**

*Willits Branch,
City Hall, first floor conference room (entrance on Commercial Rd.)*

**The fourth Friday of each month the Self-Help Legal Access (“SHLA”) Center will operate in Willits
10 AM to 12 Noon and
1 PM to 3 PM**

Our recorded information line is available 24 hours a day at (707) 468-2020. Valuable information, including links to judicial counsel legal forms and EZLegalFile, Mendocino Counties new free simple to use forms completion programs, can also be obtained anytime at www.mendocino.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.

THANK YOU FOR USING SHLA CENTER SERVICES

We sincerely hope the Center serves your needs. Our mission is to increase access to justice by providing a combination of direct legal information and education at the court to make legal procedures less complicated and more manageable. Through education and assistance we strive to empower the public to represent themselves in court. We are happy to be helping you help yourself.

This manual is designed to help explain our policies and procedures, and will hopefully answer many questions you might have about the SHLA Center. It might also provide you with valuable information about other resources which are available to you as you gather your forces to present yourself effectively and successfully in the Mendocino County Courthouse.

Sincerely,

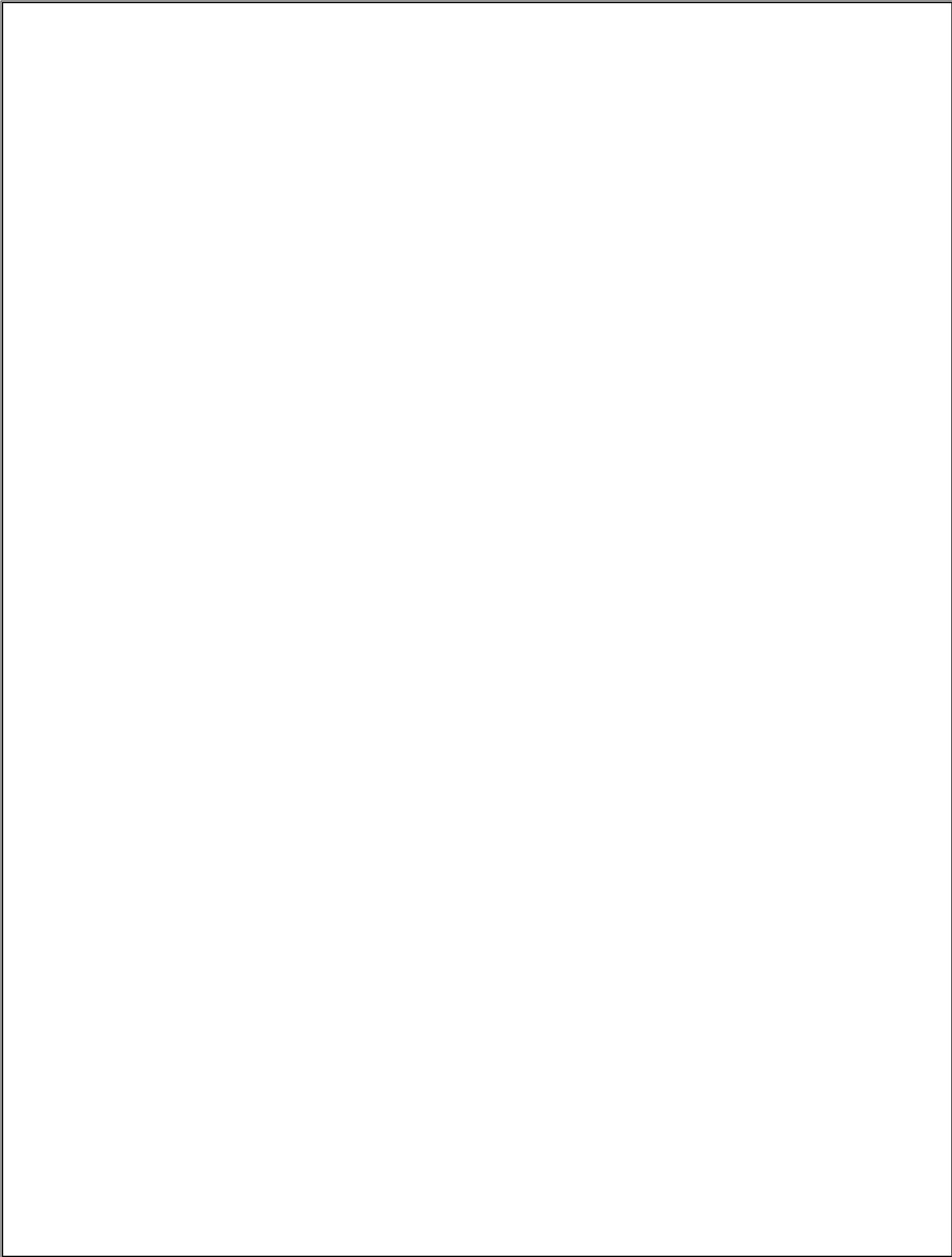
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tanya M. Ridino', written in dark ink.

Tanya M. Ridino

Tanya M. Ridino, Project Attorney
Self-help Legal Access Center

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We are Here Helping Self-represented Litigants to Help Themselves

I. We are here to help people help themselves.

We are here to give guidance. We strive to treat everyone with respect and compassion and we ask that to us you do the same. We will do our best to quickly assess your legal needs and assist you with the appropriate procedures to effectively represent yourself in court or, preferably, to resolve your issues out of court.

We can not give estimates about the outcome of motions or matters pending in court. We cannot give legal advice of the type provided by private legal counsel. We can tell you if you "could" do something, but not if you "should" do something. We like to answer "How to?" questions. We can provide information about options you may have, but you make the decisions about the options, assess risks and benefits, and analyze potential outcomes. Once a person knows his or her options, and has made an informed decision, we can assist with the procedure to help you navigating the court system.

II. We offer personal walk-in service on a first-come first-serve basis.

At this time, the SHLA Center works on a "drop-in" basis, and does not provide information by telephone. We do hope soon to include telephone services in order to facilitate access to individuals who cannot get to the Center during business hours due to work, lack of child care, or disability. At this time we are a staff of two and can only provide face to face services on a first come first serve basis.

There might be days where our sign in sheet is full and has to be closed before the end of the day. We ask therefore that you arrive early (at or before noon) and sign our sign in sheet as soon as you arrive. Our reference materials, including videos, and web access to on-line resources and judicial forms are available while you wait to speak to SHLA Center staff.

III. We are not your attorneys.

No legal attorney-client relationship is formed when you receive services from the SHLA Center, and thus there is no attorney-client privilege or confidentiality which attaches to our discussions. However, you should know that SHLA staff will not share or discuss what we learn in the SHLA center. Likewise we will not discuss what outside information SHLA staff might know about a person or case.

Because the SHLA center has no attorney-client relationships we must follow our absolute duty of impartiality. We will not give information or advice for the purpose of giving one party an advantage over another. We will not give information to one party, *which we would not give to another party*.

Information we CAN provide:

1. Information contained in docket reports, case files, indexes, and other reports.
2. Answers to questions concerning court rules, procedures and ordinary practices. These questions are frequently phrased as "can I..." or "how do I..."
3. Examples of forms or pleadings to help guide litigants.
4. Answers to questions about completing forms.
5. Explanations as to the meaning of terms and documents used in the court process.
6. Answers to questions concerning the computation of deadlines or due dates.

IV. You can use our reference materials in the center

Individuals using the self-help clinic may browse brochures and use the internet (though internet time should be limited when others are waiting). However, our funding is limited and we can not afford to repurchase books and videos. Our materials need to remain in the center for the use by the entire public with their varying needs and problems. For this reason, SHLA center books, binders and videos may not be checked out.

Our reference materials can be used within the center for an unlimited amount of time while the SHLA Center is open. To review center books, binders or videos, please request the desired material from the volunteer or staff in attendance and leave your drivers license or other proof of identification with the Center staff. The identification will be returned only upon return of the material. In special circumstances, requests may be made to take SHLA Center materials to the law library or other conference room inside the Courtroom. Such requests will be considered at the discretion of SHLA Center staff.

Certain informational materials such as brochures, pamphlets or form packets are provided to the public free of charge. Please ask!

V. You can view our legal reference video tapes.

We have two video stations. You must sign in and complete an intake form before viewing SHLA center legal videos. As described above, we ask that SHLA Center staff be given a drivers license for temporary hold while the video is reviewed. Only one video may be given to a viewer at a time. The first video needs to be returned before you can request another. All headsets are cleaned thoroughly after use.

VI. We can help you to conduct your own legal research.

The amount of research material available on the internet and in our County law library is extensive. We can help show you to materials which you can read to become more familiar with the areas of law relevant to your legal dispute. A basic understanding of California law can go a long way in helping you to be an effective advocate for yourself in Court.

The various research materials available to you include:

A. Nolo: Legal Companions

We have a number of Nolo Press Self-Help books available in the center. These books are also available in the Law Library behind the reference desk. If people want to copy the materials in the Nolo Press books, they can do so in the Law Library for ten cents a page. Nolo Press books are also widely available in book stores and general libraries since they are written for the general public, not the legal profession. Unlike most law books, Nolo Press books are affordable for those who wish to purchase a book.

B. Legal Treatises and Code Books

A "treatise" is a large book or set of books which provide a overview and analysis of case and statutory law for specific topics. Examples include the California Practice Guides published by The Rutter Group or books by the Continuing Education of the Bar ("CEB"). A treatise is a good starting place to conduct legal research, because it refers the reader to the actual cases and codes.

We can also show you how to look up a particular code section or statute online, and can explain to you the difference between case (judge made) and statutory law. The entire California code books are kept in the law library.

C. Civil Procedure

For **civil procedure** questions, including drafting complaints and answers, determining causes of actions and defenses, pre-trial motions such as demurrers, motions to strike and motions for summary judgment: WITKIN, California Procedure, published by Bancroft Whitney. This is also a multi-volume treatise. The index can be found in the last volume. The two volumes on "Pleading" will answer most questions about drafting complaints, answers, demurrers and motions to strike. The volume on "Provisional Remedies" will answer questions about obtaining temporary and immediate relief, such as preliminary injunctions.

D. Discovery

Discovery is the legal terms for procedural tools parties to a lawsuit can use to obtain information, generally via interviews, investigations or documents. One particular Rutter Group guide, Weil & Brown, Civil Procedure Before Trial, a California Practice Guide, with one volume solely devoted to discovery. This is a good place to look for information about different forms of discovery. This treatise also has step by step information about pre-trial motions, mandatory settlement conferences, and almost any type of civil proceeding in court.

E. Pleadings

Almost all court documents are required to be filed in a Judicial Counsel Form or on "pleading paper." Pleading paper is simply paper with numbers lined on the left side. Pleading paper may be found at your local stationary store or printed from the internet at: <http://www.occourts.org/locforms/1930.pdf>.

For drafting legal pleadings, where there is no judicial council form or local court form available, there are form books in the Law Library which show the type of language and structure required for a self-drafted pleading. You can look in:

1. Matthew Bender's Forms of Pleading and Practice has forms for most complaints, petitions and answers. It is a good source for drafting one's "initial pleading" to be filed with the court.
2. Bancroft-Whitney's California Civil Practice also contains some forms.
3. Matthew Bender's California Points and Authorities provides sample heading topics and citations to legal authorities for drafting memorandums of points and authorities.

F. Preparing for Trial

For preparing for trial there are many books available including:

1. The Rutter Group's Civil Trials and Evidence.
2. The Evidence Benchbook
3. WITKIN, Evidence
4. WITKIN, California Procedure, the volume on "Trials"

Legal research can seem a daunting task. But with a little guidance, a lot of patience and some good time spent reading you can figure out your legal issues. Good luck!

VII. We can refer you to other community resources.

We can refer people to other community resources. We strive to appropriately assess your needs and to only refer individuals to a correct resource, which has time to help you (or that you otherwise know when you will be helped.) Please be patient as we work together to find the appropriate service for you.

For people who need more detailed legal guidance, but cannot afford to hire an attorney to handle an entire case, Legal Services of Northern California can refer qualifying individuals to their pro bono panel. Mendocino County Attorney's who serve on this pro bono panel offer thirty minute consultations in a specified legal field. The attorney donates his or her time for the thirty minute consultation. If the attorney happens to be hired for services or consultation beyond the initial thirty minutes, the client must pay his or her regular hourly rate. To see if you qualify for this referral service, simply call Legal Services of Northern California at: (707) 462-1471 or (877) 529-7700 (Client toll-free line). You may also go see Stephanie in person at 421 North Oak Street in Ukiah.

List of Reference Materials available

Books and Reference Materials

1. Guardianships

Books:

THE GUARDIANSHIP BOOK FOR CALIFORNIA - HOW TO BECOME A CHILD'S GUARDIAN (Nolo Press)

Videos:

BECOMING A GUARDIAN (Solano Court)

2. Visitation Petitions

Books:

Notebooks (with form packets):

OSC/MOTIONS: Asking for Orders re custody, visitation, support or other (Redding Self-Help, "Self-Help Binder")

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE (For child custody, visitation, child support, spousal support, property control, and other necessary order. To establish temporary orders at the beginning of an action OR change existing orders after entry of judgment.) (Redding Self-Help)

3. Name Changes

Books:

4. Adoptions

Books:

DO YOUR OWN CALIFORNIA ADOPTION – Nolo's Guide for Stepparents and Domestic Partners (Nolo Press)

5. Restraining Orders, DV and Civil Harassment

Books:

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *Our Community's Problem* (Project Sanctuary)

MOMMY AND DADDY ARE FIGHTING

Notebooks:

CIVIL HARASSMENT (Orange County Self-Help Booklet)

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE (Orange County Self-Help Booklet)

Videos:

FREEDOM YOURSELF FROM VIOLENCE (SCLA)

6. Small Claims

Books:

The SMALL CLAIMS COURT – A Guide to Its Practical use (Cal. Dept. of Consumer Affairs)

EVERYBODY'S GUIDE TO SMALL CLAIMS COURT IN CALIFORNIA (Nolo Press)

FAIR DEBT COLLECTION, NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER, CONSUMER LAW
ORG. 617 54 9595

Videos:

SMALLCLAIMS VIDEO, LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY (get from Redding
clinic? Rachel)

Notebooks:

SMALL CLAIMS PACKET

7. Other Family Law:

NOLO'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DIVORCE (Nolo Press)

A JUDGE'S GUIDE TO DIVORCE (Nolo Press)

Notebooks:

NON-CONTESTED DIVORCE WORKSHOP: How to Finish Your Divorce When You Both Agree (Redding Self-Help)

SUMMARY DISSOLUTION (DIVORCE) (Redding Self-Help Legal Center)

DIVORCE, FORMS AND EXAMPLES (Redding Self-Help Legal Center)

TERMINATING A CALIFORNIA REGISTERED DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP (Redding Self-Help Legal Center)

8. Other:

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE (Nolo Press)

SOLVE YOUR MONEY TROUBLES (Nolo Press)

CREDIT REPAIR (Nolo Press)

CHAPTER 13 BANKRUPTCY (Nolo Press)

THE NEW BANKRUPTCY: WILL IT WORK FOR YOU? (Nolo Press)

RENTER'S RIGHTS (Nolo Press)

EVERY TENANT'S LEGAL GUIDE (Nolo Press)

BOOKS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS: OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Libros:

LA GUARDA Y CRIANZA DE NINOS, de cinco anos de edad o menos. (AOC Judicial Council).

Cuadernos:

GUIA PARA QUIENES SOLICITAN ORDENES DE PROTECCION CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DOMESTICA (AOC Judicial Council)

GUIA PARA QUIENES RESPONDEN A ORDENES DE PROTECCION CONTRA LA VILENCIA DOMESTICA (AOC – Judicial Council)

DISOLUCION SUMARIA (DIVORCIO) (Redding Self-Help Legal Center)

DIVORCIO: FORMAS Y EJEMPLOS (Redding Self-Help Legal Center)

Other Self-Help Offices in the Court

The SHLA is complimented by other useful self-help resources right here inside the Ukiah Superior Court. For example, the Law Library, the Family Law Facilitators office and the Small Claims Advisor all are available to assist you.

1. The Mendocino County Law Library is just down the hall in Room 307.

The Law Library is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am - 4:30 pm and Friday from 8 am - 4:30 pm. They can also be reached at 1-707-463-4201.

Tom, Dan or Norma is available to assist you with law library reference materials and research. Norma will assist you on Mondays. Tuesday through Friday Dan will assist you until noon and Tom will assist you from noon to 4:30.

A copy machine is available for public use (.10 cents a page) as well as two public access internet computers where legal forms can be downloaded, filled out and printed.

For internet users, the law library also has a useful website at lawlib@pacific.net with links to many full-text, primary documents such as statutes, cases, and regulations for California, the United States and beyond. There are links to reference materials, legal forms, areas of specific legal interest, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

2. The Family Law Facilitator's office is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Thursday from 1-4. Deborah Johnson has been the Court's Family Law Facilitator for many years and can be found down one floor in Room 212. The office has an info line and accepts calls at: (707) 463-5666.

The Family Law Facilitator assists parents and all other parties who have questions about family law issues, including child support, spousal support, health insurance and the availability of community resources to help families.

3. Mendocino County also has a Small Claims Advisor who provides individual consultations over the phone. For legal assistance with your Small Claims legal action and/or have if you have questions about filing your claim, contact the Small Claims Advisor at (866) 820-8663 within Mendocino County, or (707) 462-2455 outside of Mendocino County from 10:00a.m. to 12:00p.m. Monday through Thursday. Please note, the Small Claims Advisor does not receive messages, and thus can not return phone calls.

Other Self-Help Resources Available On-Line

1. California Courts Online Self-Help Center

The California Courts Online Self-Help Center, launched in July 2001, is the nation's most comprehensive court-sponsored source of legal information available on the Internet. Currently more than 500,000 court users make use of more than 2,500,000 pages from the site each month. To meet the same needs for our Spanish-speaking public, the council recently launched Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California, the most comprehensive Spanish-language resource for information about the California courts.

English: www.courtinfo.ca.gov

Español: www.sucorte.ca.gov

2. LawHelpCalifornia.org

LawHelpCalifornia.org provides the public with easy internet access to basic legal information and legal resources in California.

<http://www.LawHelpCA.org>

3. Legal Services of Northern California

Providing effective empowerment advocacy, and access to systems of justice for poor individuals, families, and communities in 23 counties throughout Northern California. Ukiah's Legal Services of Northern California, particularly, serves low income tenants in unlawful detainer and other housing law actions and assists individuals receiving public benefits to ensure they receive fair and just treatment with respect to their benefits.

www.lsnc.net

4. Mendocino County Law Library

A free public law library providing access to general legal resources to the citizens of Mendocino County. There are links to many full-text, primary documents such as statutes, cases, and regulations for California, the United States, and beyond.

www.pacificsites.com/~lawlib

5. Mendocino Works

Six resource centers located throughout Mendocino County that offer comprehensive employment and training services to businesses and job seekers as a "one-stop" service network.

www.mendocinoworks.org

6. **Mendocino County Public Library**

Six branches throughout Mendocino County, including the Bookmobile. Find, order, and renew books on-line; on-line access to magazine, newspaper and e-book databases.

www.mendolibrary.org

7. **National Legal Services Document Assembly Server**

This Web site helps people prepare legal documents using programmed “templates.”

The site is for low-income people who can’t afford to pay for legal assistance, and their non-profit advocates. Commercial use is strictly forbidden. There is no charge for this, but on-line registration is required and acceptance of their terms of use.

<https://npado.org/>

8. **Nolo**

Nolo provides do-it-yourself legal solutions for consumers and small businesses. They hope to help people handle their own everyday legal matters -- or learn enough about them to make working with a lawyer a more satisfying experience. Nolo offers affordable, plain-English books, forms and software on a wide range of legal issues, including wills, estate planning, retirement, elder care, personal finance, taxes, housing, real estate, divorce and child custody. They also offer on-line information and materials on legal matters, human resources, employment, intellectual property, and starting and running a small business.

<http://www.nolo.com/>

8. **Laws: Legislative Council of California**

This is the official site for California legislative information. You may read Accessing California Legislative Information on the Internet, refer to Frequently Asked Questions or be linked to other legislative websites.

<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>

8. **Consumer Information: Department of Consumer Affairs**

The site has information to promote and protect the interests of California consumers. Learn your rights and responsibilities as a consumer. Learn to make smart choices and solve problems. In an effort to protect consumers, the Department of Consumer Affairs also licenses and regulates 2.3 million professionals, including doctors, dentists, contractors and auto repair technicians.

<http://www.dca.ca.gov>

8. **Businesses: the California Secretary of State**

For on-line records to corporations, partnerships and limited liability companies, including name and address of agent for service of process of a legal complaint.

<http://www.ss.ca.gov>

List of Commonly Requested Offices in Court

Administration (see below)	(707) 467-6437
Civil Division	463-4481
Collections	463-4785
Criminal Division	463-4661
Family Law Division	463-4481
Family Law Facilitator	463-5666
Family Mediation	463-4484
Jury Commissioner	463-4663
Juvenile Division	463-4481
Probate Division	463-4481
Small Claims Division	463-4481
Traffic Division	463-4661

Court Administration and Management Support Staff

Benjamin D. Stough, Executive Officer	467-6437
Diane Parker Court Fiscal Manager	467-6437
Sherry Mobley Court Services Manager I Civil/Family Law/Juvenile/ Small Claims	463-4481
Patty Langley Court Services Manager II Outlying Courts	463-6819
Vicki Piver Court Services Manager II Criminal/Traffic	463-4661
Julie Lyly Court Services Manager II Civil/Family Law/Juvenile/Small Claims	463-4481
Sally Nevarez Court Services Manager I Criminal/Traffic	463-4481
Yolanda Nunez Calendar Coordinator	468-3498

Other Resource Information Sheets

Information soon to come!

Adult Literacy Programs

Information soon to come!

Please Return an Evaluation Form

We are a new office and are working for the public. The feedback received regarding the usefulness of our services will only help us better serve. Please, take a moment to fill out our simple evaluation form and leave it in the “Suggestion” Box near the front door.

If you are in an extreme hurry (rushing to file an answer or have to meet some other filing deadline) please of course, get to the clerk’s office in time. However, your opinions are important to us so please stop back in after filing your papers and complete an evaluation form.